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Recommendations of various Post-Independence Commissions and Committees on the inclusion of Minorities in Mainstream Education

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Abstract

Education is a powerful tool that can be used to transform the world into a civilized one, fostering international understanding, unity in diversity, and prosperity within society. Therefore, it is necessary to educate every person in the country to make it a developed, civilized, and prosperous one. Quality Education makes a person productive and inculcates fundamental social, moral, and spiritual values, which ultimately make them a person of character, as advocated by Swami Vivekananda. The recently launched National Education Policy 2020 states, "Inclusive and equitable education - while indeed an essential goal in its own right - is also critical to achieving an inclusive and equitable society in which every citizen has the opportunity to dream, thrive, and contribute to the nation." Thus, it emphasized the inclusion of all the communities in mainstream education. However, as of now, the literacy rate and representation of the many minority communities of India are considerably low compared to the national average. Since independence, numerous commissions and committees have addressed this issue, providing suitable recommendations for the inclusion of all minorities in mainstream education. This article will focus on the suggestions and recommendations of various post-independence commissions and committees in this regard, as well as the initiatives taken by the central government to improve the educational status of all minorities in the country.

Keywords: *Status of Minorities, Committees & Commissions, Recommendations*

INTRODUCTION

Education is considered the backbone of society, as it fosters social efficiency by instilling ideal citizenship and promoting economic efficiency (Dewey, 1930). It shapes and molds the human character by inculcating necessary skills, knowledge, attitude, and values (Taneja, 2005). Besides shaping the human character, it also develops cognitive abilities such as reasoning, critical thinking, reflective thinking, and abstract thinking (Woolfolk, 2019). It is said that a good education is founded and graded in such a way that it sows in the young children seeds of divine love, human affection, and universal brotherhood that grow in them, take root, and expand in their respective progressive stages of life, and eventually reach perfection (Faiz, 2021). Therefore, quality educational facilities play a leading role in empowering society and its members by exposing them to the world of work and helping them to choose the right one that is according to their abilities, needs, and interest, leads to becoming a productive citizen of the country which is needed for economic prosperity and National Development of the country (Chauhan, 2015).

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India is a large country, both geographically and culturally, where people belong to various religions, races, socio-economic strata, languages, and cultures (Kaul, 2015). The tastes and needs of these groups vary significantly. India is a country of secularism and pluralism, and its constitution prohibits discrimination among its citizens based on caste, creed, language, religion, race, and class. However, some communities do not share a considerable share of political, social, and economic power in society, which makes them a minority (NCERT, 2017). The Oxford Dictionary (2010) defines 'Minority' as "a smaller number or part, especially a number or part representing less than half of the whole; a relatively small group of people, differing from others in race, religion, language, or political persuasion". Although the Indian Constitution does not define the 'Minority', it mentions it in Articles 29, 30, and 350A. Religious minorities and linguistic minorities are two categories of minorities recognized in India, according to the National Commission for Religious and Linguistic Minorities' 2007 Report (NCERT, 2017) and Article 30. Currently, there are six different groups of religious minorities: Parsis (Zoroastrians), Jains, Buddhists, Sikhs, Christians, and Muslims, which collectively constitute 20.22% of India's total population (Faiz, 2021). Since there is no majority of linguistic minorities at the national level, the status of the minorities must primarily be determined at the State/Union Territory level. After independence, some minority communities faced discrimination in accessing the necessities provided by the government, which left them in underdeveloped conditions (NCERT, 2017). Among these minority groups, Parsis (Zoroastrian), Jains, Buddhists, Sikhs, and Christians are educationally and economically well-off and sound, but SC, ST, Women, PWD, and Muslims, which share the most significant proportion among the minority in the country, are severely backward economically and educationally and underrepresented in the mainstream society (AISHE-2020; & NSS-2011-12). The following table gives the percentage of the population and status of various subgroups on the various indicators:

Percentage of various communities in India according to Census-2001 & Census-2011:

Table-1:

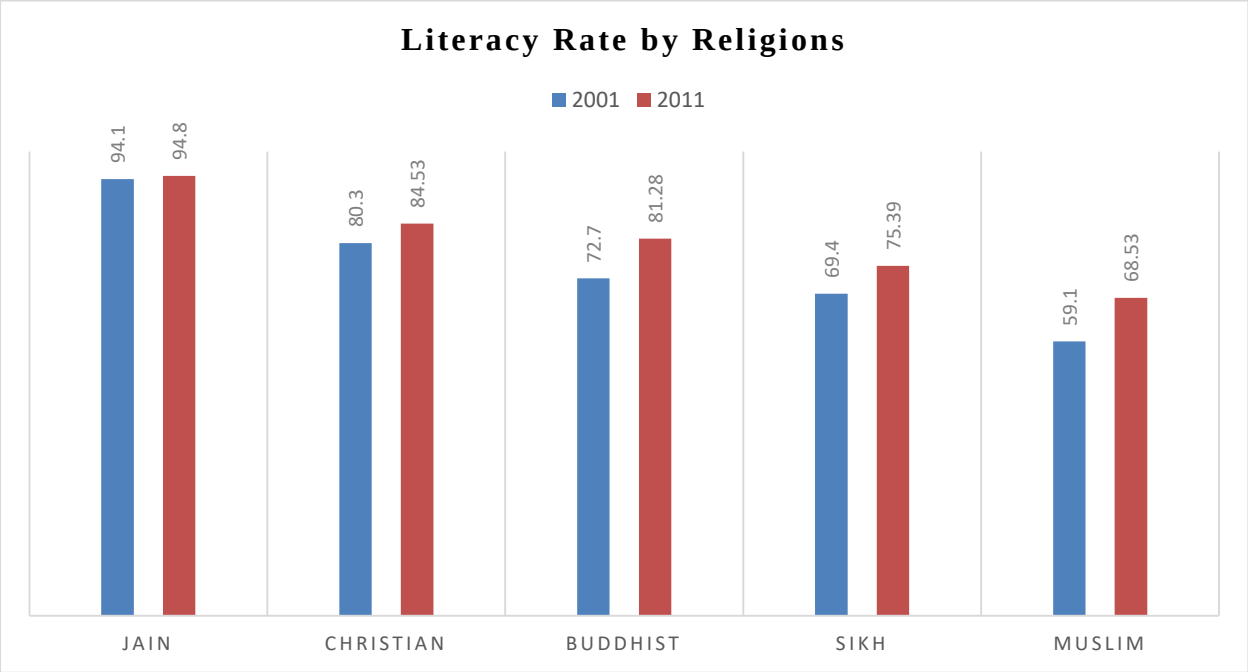
Communities	**Census 2001 Data in %**	**Census 2011 Data in %**
Hindu	80.5	79.8
Muslim	13.4	14.2
Christian	2.3	2.3
Sikh	1.9	1.7
Buddhist	0.8	0.7
Jain	0.4	0.4

Status of Minorities on some parameters according to the 66th round of the National Sample Survey is as follows:

1. **Sex Ratio**: The Muslim population is declining in comparison to the Christian population in rural and urban areas.
2. **Average household size:** Muslims have a higher average household size compared to Christians in both urban and rural areas.
3. **Self-Employment:** the proportion of Sikhs is the highest in cultivation, Muslims have the highest proportion in laboring in rural areas, and Christians are the highest in the regular salaried job sector.
4. **Average Monthly Per Capita Expenditure (MPCE): Sikh populations have the highest average monthly per Capita Expenditure,** followed by Christians in both rural and urban areas.
5. **The literacy rate among the population above the age of 15 shows that Sikhs have the highest literate population,** followed by Christians.

Graph 1 below explains the literacy rate by religion:

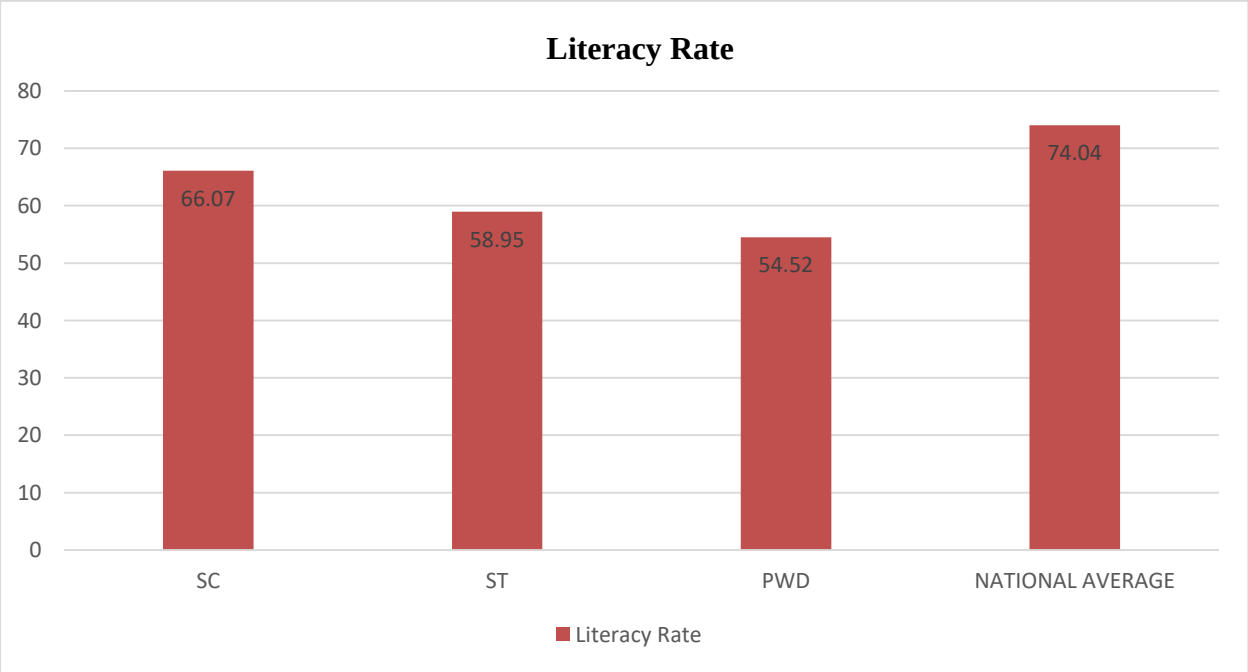
Graph: 1



Source: Census-2001 and 2011, Government of India.

Graph 2 gives the details of the literacy rate among SCs, STs, and PWDs compared to the National Average:

Graph: 2

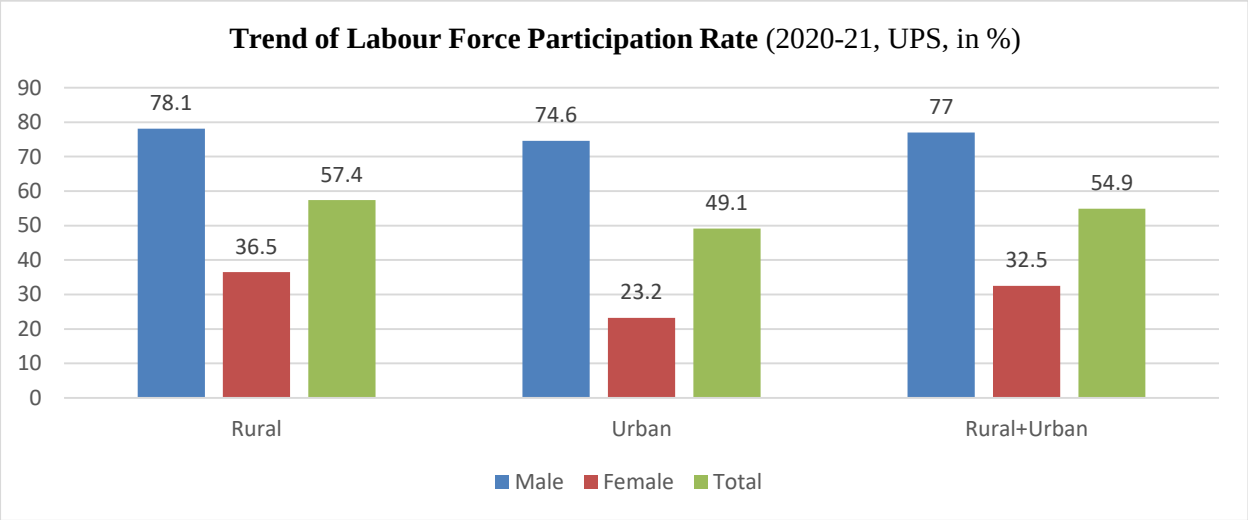


Source: Census- 2011, Government of India.

6. **Labor Force Participation Rate (LFPR) and Work Participation Rate (WPR):** Christians had the lowest LFPR. Christians had the most significant male-to-female disparity in rural male, rural female, and urban female, while Sikhs had the highest male-to-male disparity in urban male.

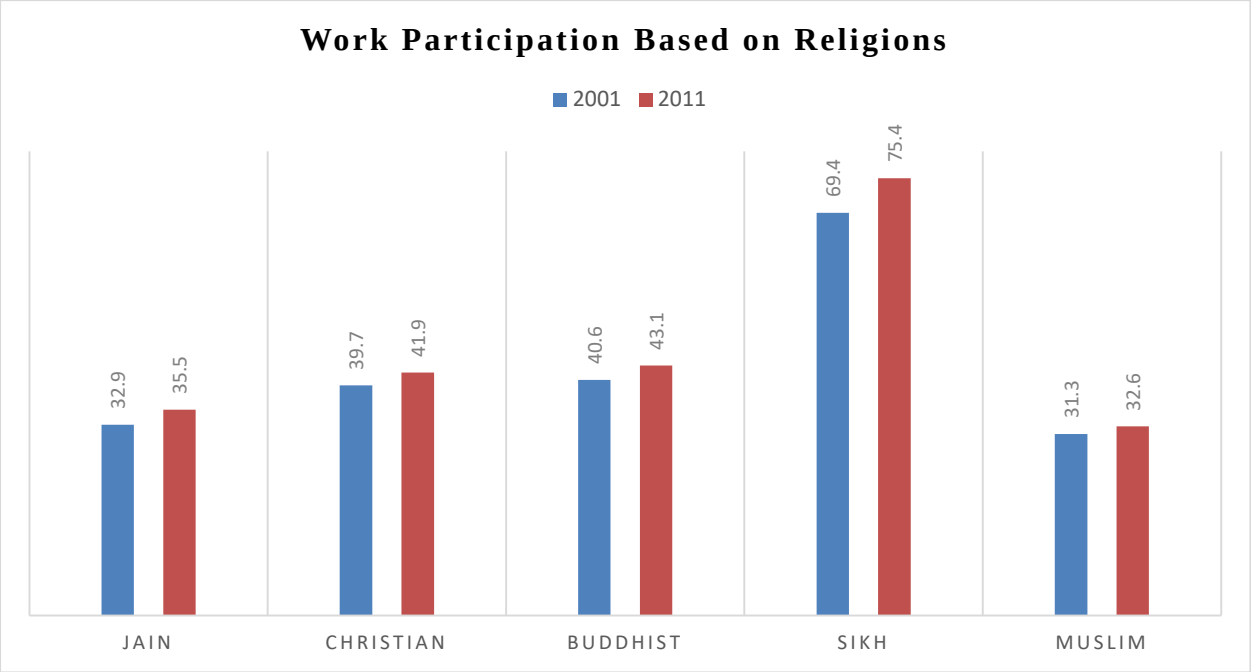
Further, the following Graph-3 and 4 explain the trend of labor force participation rate based on Gender in the year 2020-21 and Work Participation rate based on religion from 2001-2011:

Graph: 3



Source: India; MOSPI (Periodic Labour Force Survey); FY 2020-21.

Graph: 4

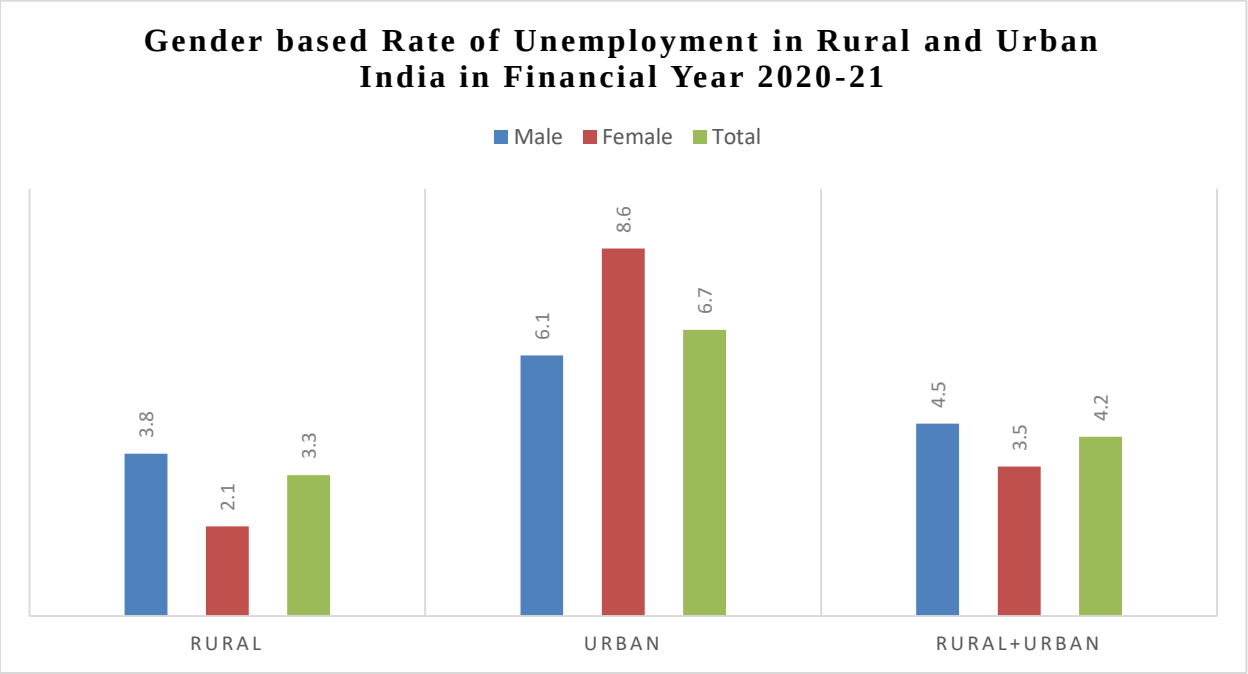


Source: Census 2001 and 2011, Government of India.

7. **Unemployment Rate:** In rural regions, Christians have the highest percentage of unemployment rates among males (3%) and females (6%), and Sikhs have the highest percentage of unemployment rates among males (6%) and females (8%) in urban areas.

   In this context, Graph-5 gives a glimpse of the rate of unemployment based on gender in rural and urban areas:

Graph-5



Source: India; MOSPI (Periodic Labour Force Survey); FY 2020-21.

From the above table and graphs, it is crystal clear that SCs, STs, Women, PWDs, and minorities, especially Muslims, are seriously marginalized and underrepresented in employment and also in the field of education. Therefore, it is an urgent need of the hour to take some initiatives for their inclusion in order to make an inclusive society.

METHODOLOGY

The present study undertakes a review and analysis of reports from various commissions and committees constituted by the Government of India after independence, specifically in 1947. After carefully reviewing and analyzing, the researcher has presented brief descriptions of the recommendations for the inclusion of minorities made by post-independence commissions and committees.

EFFORTS OF INCLUSION OF MINORITIES: FROM THE PAGES OF HISTORY

The Government of India, after gaining independence in 1947, made several efforts to include minorities in education, social, and economic aspects. In this context, various commissions and committees have been set up, and they have submitted their recommendations in this regard. These recommendations are being presented under the following lines:

A. Provisions in The Indian Constitution

The Indian Constitution guarantees equal opportunities for all citizens, regardless of religion, caste, creed, race, region, or gender, thereby prohibiting discrimination based on these factors. All individuals are guaranteed equality before the law and equal security under the law, as stipulated in Article 14 of the Indian Constitution. Discrimination based on religion, race, caste, sex, or location of birth is forbidden by Article 15. Article 16 states that all citizens shall have equal access to job opportunities and appointments to all positions held by the State. According to Article 21, no one may be stripped of their life or personal freedom unless authorized by law. Elementary education was declared a fundamental right by Article 21(A), and Article 25 guarantees freedom of conscience as well as the freedom to profess, practice, and spread one's religion. The freedom to manage religious institutions and religious affairs is guaranteed by Article 26,

subject to the principles of public morality, health, and order. The freedom of minorities to preserve their language, script, or culture is protected by Article 29. Article 30 protects the interests of minorities by granting them the freedom to create and operate educational establishments of their choice. According to Article 39, the state must, in particular, focus its policies on ensuring that all citizens, men and women, have an equitable right to a sufficient standard of living. Article 51 mentions that every Indian resident has a responsibility to promote peace and the spirit of common brotherhood among all. All issues related to the protections offered for linguistic minorities and their development are highlighted in Article 350.

B. **Kothari Commission (1964-66)**

The Government of India appointed the Commission on 14th July 1964. The Commission included eminent personalities in various fields from India and abroad. This commission was set up under the chairmanship of Dr. D.S. Kothari, chairman of the U.G.C. This commission is also known as the **"Education Commission"**. The Commission submitted its report in June 1966 titled **"Education and National Development".** This commission did a tremendous job by identifying groups that were educationally excluded- SCs, STs, OBCs, Minorities, Women, and Persons with Disabilities, and also gave some remarkable recommendations under the headings of **"Equalization of Educational Opportunity"** in the following way-

- Abolish the tuition fees at the primary and secondary levels of education in both public and private schools.
- Provide tuition-free education at the higher secondary and university levels to all needy and deserving students. 30% of the enrolment should be given a free studentship.
- The cost of a private educational institution should be reduced reasonably.
- Free textbooks and writing materials should be provided at the primary stage.
- Grants should be given to the top 10% talented students.

Scholarship should be given in the following way-

1. 2.5% of the total enrolment at the higher primary stage by 1975-76 and 5% by 1985-86.
2. 5% of the total enrollment in between 7th and 8th standards should be given a scholarship by 1975-76, and 10% by 1985-86.
3. Scholarships should be awarded to the top 15% of the total undergraduate enrolment by 1975-76 and to 25% by 1985-86.
4. Scholarships should be awarded to the top 25% of the total enrollment at the postgraduate stage by 1975-76 and to 50% by 1985-86.
5. Recommended to formulate a Standing Committee on Postgraduate and Research Scholarship at the National Level under the Ministry of Education to award scholarships at the postgraduate stage.
6. Recommended to provide a scholarship for vocational education.
7. Recommended to provide 500 scholarships each year for the most talented students to study abroad.
8. 10% of the total disabled children should be given proper education facilities (15% of blind, deaf, and orthopedically handicapped children and 5% of the mentally disabled children).
9. Recommended the integration of disabled children into the regular school programme.
10. Recommended to minimize the gap between the states regarding the educational development by taking necessary steps and initiatives, such as a policy of equalizing the education opportunities for all the states of the country.
11. Women have the potential to become productive and to contribute to national development and prosperity. In this regard, special machinery should be established at the national and state levels to oversee the education of women. Various schemes should be implemented to train women for part-time and full-time employment in fields such as teaching, nursing, and social services.
12. Special efforts should be made for the educational development of Other Backward Classes.

Recommendation regarding the education of Tribal people-

1. Ashram schools should be established in areas with a sparse population.
2. The provision of hostels, schools, and scholarship opportunities should be significantly expanded.
3. The scholarship programme should be decentralized and efficient.
4. Tuition facilities should be made available at the secondary and university levels.
5. Non-official organizations and social service cadres should be developed to provide services to tribal people for their educational upliftment and economic empowerment.

C. **National Policy on Education - 1968**

This policy made the following recommendations-

1. The regional gap in educational development needs to be reduced, and quality education should be provided in rural and other underdeveloped areas.
2. To promote national integration, a unified school system should be adopted nationwide.
3. All students from all social classes should be given admission based on merit, and they should be provided with free education to prevent segregation of social classes.
4. To transform society from a grassroots level, it is necessary to give emphasis to the education of girls.
5. Emphasis should be given to the education of disabled children, and attempts should be made to bring the disabled children into integrated settings to avoid the exclusion of disabled children.

D. **National Policy Education-1986 & Programme of Action-1992**

The NPE-1986 and POA made some recommendations under the headings of **"Education for Equality"** as follows-

- Education needs to catalyze change in the status of women. Advocate for redesigning the curricula, textbooks, learning materials, training, and orientation to teachers, administrators, and decision makers to suit the needs, interests, and empower women. All educational institutions should be involved in empowering and uplifting the women of the country.
- Removing illiteracy among women by motivating them to actively participate in vocational, technical, and professional education at various levels, with a special focus on eliminating stereotypical behavior against women.
- Recommended to improve the educational status of SC's in all four dimensions e.g. rural male, rural female, urban male and urban female by providing incentives to families to send their children till 14 years of age, pre-matric scholarship scheme, micro planning to ensure their participation, retention and successful completion of basic level of education, representation of SC's members in educational fields and establishing the school buildings and Balwadis at the location of SC's dominated areas.
- ST's population has its own distinct socio-cultural characteristics and language; accordingly, curricula, textbooks, and instructional strategies should be developed in the tribal language to foster a rich cultural identity among the tribal people. Residential schools, Anganwadis, Non-formal education, and Adult education centers should be set up on a priority basis. Incentives should be provided to deserving candidates who are in need of support for their participation and completion of basic education.
- Recommended to improve the educational status of other backward classes, especially in rural, hilly, and desert areas, remote, inaccessible areas, and islands by providing necessary infrastructure.
- This policy admits that some minorities are educationally backward and deprived. They should be integrated into the mainstream education system by utmost effort to guarantee them the

constitutional rights mentioned in Articles 29 and 30. Their interests, culture, and needs should be taken into consideration during the formulation of policy, preparation of textbooks, curricula, and instructional strategies, in the interest of social justice, equality, and equity.

- The education of physically and mentally disabled children should be done with regular students for overall growth and development to boost their self-concept to face all situations with courage and confidence. Wherever possible, education of motor handicap and other mild handicaps should be done with non-disabled peers. A collective effort should be taken to establish residential special schools for severely handicapped children. Adequate arrangements should be made for vocational training of people with disabilities, as well as teacher training and orientation programs, to enable teachers to deal with the disabled population effectively.

E. Sachar Committee Report (2006)

- ❖ The Committee vehemently recommends that policies to address the relative deprivation of Muslims in the nation should severely emphasize inclusive development and the "mainstreaming" of the Community while respecting diversity. In addition to improving inclusion of the truly disadvantaged SRCs in "spaces" established by public programs and policy interventions, there is a pressing need to recognize diversity in residential, work, and educational spaces. It is impossible to overstate the importance of equity and inclusion in a pluralistic community. However, to promote inclusion, methods for ensuring equity and equality of opportunity should be designed in a way that both diversity can be achieved and the perception of discrimination can be eliminated. This is only feasible if Muslims are fully acknowledged as an essential component of India's diverse social mosaic.
- ❖ It is agreed that justice must not only be done, but also look to have been done. In light of this, the Committee urges the government to establish an Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) to investigate the complaints of underprivileged groups. It is the responsibility of the state to provide free and compulsory education up to the age of 14. Moreover, if Muslims and all children from low socioeconomic backgrounds are to better their educational opportunities, then this duty must be fulfilled.
- ❖ Compared to the nation as a whole, which has 23% of children in this age range, Muslims have the highest percentage of children (27%) in this age group. Although they have increased recently, the Muslim enrollment and continuation percentages at the elementary level are still the lowest. These statistics underscore the significance of primary education for the Community and emphasize the importance of ensuring that all children between the ages of 0 and 14 have access to a free, high-quality education.
- ❖ High-quality government schools should be established in areas with a significant Muslim population.
- ❖ Girls' schools should be established from 9-12 standards, especially for Muslim girls, to improve their participation in the fields of education.
- ❖ Another option is to build boarding homes for disadvantaged SRCs in the taluka headquarters, where a sizable number of underprivileged minority and other children can live while attending nearby schools. From the special funds set aside by the Center for the improvement of the educational standing of educationally disadvantaged groups, allocations may be made for both of these projects. Again, the Community's involvement needs to be promoted. Muslim Wakfs should be pushed to use their resources for this goal. Additionally, contributions from NGOs and multilateral institutions may be used.
- ❖ An Urdu-medium school should be established to cater to the interests of the Urdu-speaking population and improve their participation in the mainstream education system.

- ❖ Teachers should be trained in curriculum components to address plurality and diversity rightly, and they should be sensitized about the needs and aspirations of Muslim minorities and disadvantaged groups.
- ❖ To bring the minority from Madrasa to mainstream education, the Madrasa should be linked with higher secondary boards and have its education made equivalent for admission to higher education.
- ❖ Participation of the Muslim community in government employment and other programmes is minimal. Therefore, experts from the Muslim community should be on the selection committee to boost the confidence of Muslim applicants.
- ❖ Funds for the Maulana Azad Education Foundation should be increased to 1000 crores to make it more effective.

F. Fatmi Committee Report (2007):

To implement the recommendations of the Sachar Committee, the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, established a 13-member High-Level Committee, chaired by Mr. A. A. Fatmi, the then Minister of State for HRD, on January 31, 2007. To address the socio-economic and educational goals of the Muslim Community, the committee proposed an Action Plan with 13 chapters and 39 points.

- Provide Muslim students with the finest coaching facilities. Muslim students should also be granted scholarships similar to the Dr. Ambedkar Scholarship. Additionally, a public fund should be established for the education of Muslim females.
- Any area with a population of 20% or more should have an Anganwadi center. This community should have easy access to loans, allowing schools to be established.
- Muslim students should have easy access to all schools in all regions. 2507 primary and 4465 upper primary schools should be established in the 88 Districts where there is a majority of Muslims, with 458 KGBV schools and the same in 427 blocks also accepted.
- Additionally, NCERT textbooks for Madarsa classes 1 through 12 should be created.
- Aligarh Muslim University, Jamia Millia Islamia, and Maulana Azad National Urdu University have all accepted the creation of the Center for Promotion of Urdu Medium Teachers. Five additional AMU campuses have also been approved for construction, including those in Bhopal, Kishanganj, Murshidabad, Mallapuram, and Pune (Faiz, 2021).

G. Recommendations of National Education Policy-2020:

NEP was formulated under the chairmanship of **Dr. Kasturirangan** to facilitate a participatory, inclusive, multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and holistic approach to education. Sustainable development goals mentioned **'Quality Education'** under the goal-4 was adopted by India in 2015 and seeks to **"Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all"** by 2030. The National Education Policy-2020 aims at making **"India a global knowledge superpower (Vishwaguru)".**

The following recommendations were made under the two headings **"Equitable and Inclusive Education: Learning for All"** and **"Equity and Inclusion in Higher Education"-**

This policy encompasses all minorities, women, marginalized sections, disadvantaged groups, and persons with disabilities ***(Divyang)*** under the umbrella of **Socio-economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs)**. These groups are seriously underrepresented in the field of education, particularly in terms of enrolment, retention, and successful completion of basic education. Therefore, various remedial measures need to be undertaken, such as scholarships, grants, incentives, and the development of efficient intervention

strategies to improve their considerable participation at every level of education. It becomes evident that providing bicycles for transport may have significantly improved the schooling percentages of the SEDGs community. Peer tutoring, one-on-one instruction, open schooling, suitable infrastructure, a resource center, special educators with cross-disability training, and advanced technological devices can be effective in providing quality education to children with special needs. To help children with disabilities integrate more easily into classrooms and interact with teachers and their peers, assistive devices, appropriate technology-based tools, and adequate, language-appropriate teaching and learning materials (such as textbooks in accessible formats, such as large print and Braille) will be made available. Counsellors need to be appointed at the school level to address the emotional problems of disabled children.

NEP 2020 also talked about home-based education of children with severe disability who are unable to attend regular schooling. Exceptional support should be given to the parents of severely disabled children for proper educational and physical development. It is also recommended to identify areas primarily dominated by educationally disadvantaged SEDGs and declare them as Special Education Zones (SEZs) to implement all schemes and programs with utmost priority and effort. It is recommended that the Center establish a "Gender Inclusion Fund" to provide equitable, high-quality education to girls and transgender students. The number of Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas and Kendriya Vidyalayas needs to be increased across the country on a priority basis to increase the participation rate of SEDGs groups.

This policy addresses the inclusion of SEDGs in the field of higher education by providing necessary financial assistance, setting clear targets for GER in higher education, establishing Higher Education Institutions in the area of Special Education Zones, and conducting various outreach programs on the opportunities and benefits of higher education among SEDGs. It is also recommended to design the curriculum in such a way that it is more inclusive. For developing bridge courses, teaching degree courses bilingually, taking into consideration the nearby regional language, and creating institutional development strategies with detailed action plans to boost SEDG's participation.

Conclusion

From the above discussion, it becomes evident that minorities, women, SCs, STs, and people with disabilities are seriously underrepresented and lie below the National average level of educational and employment participation. Therefore, inclusion of SEDGs in the mainstream is one of the most important tasks to make India a genuinely democratic, economically strong, and culturally developed nation. In this regard, all recommendations made by earlier commissions and committees need to be thoroughly scrutinized, and those that are suitable in today's context may be incorporated into framing a tangible and comprehensive educational policy.

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